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HEAR OUR PLEA FOR DIVERSITY IN MOVIES. PAGES 16-17

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Summer movie. George Clooney's new film "Tomorrowland" adds a jolt of optimism to our bleak times. The actor didn't even mind that it cast him as a middle-aged grump. PAGE 13

Mr. Brightside

George Clooney gets to play very, very close to his age as a middle-aged former boy genius in the Disney adventure romp "Tomorrowland." / GETTY IMAGES

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Did voters send a clear message on schools?

Election. Voters said schools were their top priority. But candidates never made the issue a central campaign theme.

Above, Helen Gym made public education a centerpiece of her campaign. Below, parents protest at a School Reform Commission meeting. / ALL PHOTOS CHARLES MOSTOLLER

Data

In 32 of the city's 66 voting wards, more than 80 percent of people said yes to a symbolic referendum to abolish the School Reform Commission.

- That referendum was supported by 75 percent of voters across the city.
- State Sen. Tony Williams, a strong supporter of charters, did best in wards where the vote to abolish SRC topped 80 percent.
- These wards are also the ones where Gym saw her least favorable results.
- In February, the SRC voted to approve five new charter schools, far less than advocates hoped for.

Quoted

"They're going to want the current City Council to make sure they are putting stuff on the table to make sure schools are supported and secured." Susan Gobreski

The city's education system has consistently ranked as voters' top concerns. So what do the results of Tuesday's election say about what residents want?

Consider this: The mayoral candidate most identified with support for charter schools — Tony Williams — lost in a landslide.

Meanwhile, Helen Gym, who rallied public school parents and made public education a centerpiece of her campaign, came in fifth among a slate of 12 candidates for city council in a race that dislodged two incumbents. That was enough to win an at-large council seat, but her margin over the sixth-place candidate, who will not be going to council, amounted to just 0.2 percent of the vote.

But observers of the race say it's unclear that any coherent narrative can emerge from voting patterns. That's because many candidates did not emphasize education policy as part of their campaigns.

"I think that while education was not a deciding factor, I do believe that education remains a top priority for voters," said Lawrence Jones, board president of Pennsylvania Coalition of Charter Schools and CEO of Richard Allen Prep Charter School.

In general, areas where Williams did his best also saw disproportionately large share of people casting a symbolic vote to abolish the School Reform Commission. But many observers cautioned against reading too much into that data point, because while in some districts support for the ballot measure hit 85 percent, it only took 75 percent across the city.

The mayor and the council have little direct control over the School Reform Commission, which is, essentially, the city's school board. The mayor appoints two members to the commission, the governor appoints three. But the commission has no independent ability to levy taxes. For revenue, it must turn to city council and state government.

Susan Gobreski, executive director of Education Voters PA, says Gym's seat on council in the face of advantages held by incumbents is a strong indicator that education policy did matter to voters.

She said that when it comes time to set the district's next budget, voters will be watching.

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Safety. Dems press for more Amtrak funds after derailment

U.S. Senate Democrats from the Northeast, where Amtrak is considered essential, vowed Thursday to fight Republican budget cuts to the passenger line.

Sen. Chuck Schumer and eight other Democrats said they would press for Amtrak to be funded at $2.45 billion — up from the $1.14 billion the Republican-controlled House Appropriations Committee approved one day after Amtrak 188 derailed.

"Philadelphia was preventable and it was predictable," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut). REUTERS

Injured

Star chef recovering after Amtrak crash

Colleagues recently revealed that celebrity chef Eli Kulp, who was injured during the Amtrak 188 crash on May 12, suffered a serious spinal injury and will require "months of rehabilitation."

Ellen Yin, co-owner with Kulp of Fork and High Street on Market restaurants, said in a statement that despite the injuries, Kulp "has already shown early signs of recovery."

"Plans are now being made for his aggressive rehabilitation. Eli and his family will need all of our support during this difficult time," Yin said. "We are all standing behind Eli as he recuperates. Eli, his family and I thank all our friends, family and staff for their concern, love and support."

Eli Kulp / PROVIDED

A July 16 fundraiser for Kulp is being planned at Fork, Yin said. METRO

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Domestic violence

Charges against Ray Rice dropped

A New Jersey judge on Thursday dismissed domestic violence charges against former Baltimore Raven and NFL star Ray Rice, 28, for knocking unconscious the woman he later married after Rice completed a pretrial intervention program.

The February 2014 incident involving Rice and Janay Palmer in an Atlantic City casino elevator led to Rice being released by the Ravens. **REUTERS**

Ray Rice / GETTY IMAGES

Popular Spruce Street Harbor Park opens Friday

Take me to the river.
Attractions galore will be popping up on the Delaware River this weekend.

Summer starts this weekend — unofficially anyway — and it's time for barbecues, trips to the shore, family getaways and, for its second year, Spruce Street Harbor Park.

The park, at Columbus Boulevard and Spruce Street at the Delaware riverfront, opens today after a boffo debut last year.

The park, sponsored by the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation attracted huge crowds from all over the greater Philadelphia region.

"It was a fantastic success," explained DWRC vice-president Joe Forkin. "We exceeded all expectations and brought in over 500,000 people throughout the entire summer."

Left, the new RiverRink at Spruce Street Harbor Park awaits its first visitors Friday. Right, workers prepare roller skates. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER

Quoted

"We learned Spruce Street needed to be an everyday attraction."
Forkin

Following the popularity of a winter ice skating rink at the site, the DWRC partnered again with Blue Cross and installed a roller rink for the summer season. Along with a $3 skating fee, skates can be rented for $10.

"We wanted to return this summer strong, and with the success of the ice rink, we've teamed up with Blue Cross for a family fun roller rink," explained Forkin.

Spruce Street, along with the rest of Penn's Landing, was already a popular spot for one-time events and concerts, and officials wanted to expand its appeal.

"It's rewarding and complementary to our city and is a great place to listen to live music, enjoy a sandwich, grab a beer or take a nap in a hammock," said Forkin.

Spruce Street Harbor Park is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday.

The Phillie Phanatic and Philly's own DJ Jazzy Jeff will perform during the opening celebration.

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Century-old citizens honored

Mayor Michael Nutter honored Philadelphians aged over 100 Thursday, including, clockwise, the birthday cake for the honorees; Azlene Giles, 106; oldest male and female Eli P. Zebooker, 102 and Fannie Mae Ausby, 108; the group celebrates; Celeste Zambino, 103; and Marvin Fisher, 100. ALL PHOTOS CHARLES MOSTOLLER

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SJU softball player makes sexual hazing claim

Hazing. An explosive new lawsuit claims freshman athletes at St. Joseph's were subjected to a hazing ritual.

Terri Adams / SJU

A female softball player at St. Joseph's University said she and other freshmen were forced to simulate oral sex on wine bottles, drink alcohol even though she was on medication and underage, and simulate the coach having an orgasm, according to a new lawsuit.

The Jesuit school and its softball coach Terri Adams allegedly allowed a culture of abusive sexual hazing on the team that eventually forced the 20-year-old plaintiff, identified in court papers as Jane Doe, to give up her scholarship and leave the school.

The plaintiff says she experienced most of these acts in the fall of 2013 during what was known as an "initiation week."

The lawsuit claims Adams "never put a stop to such misconduct and instead endorsed it by allowing it to continue and actively engaged in such misconduct herself."

The lawsuit says the upperclassmen called Jane Doe and other underclassmen "scum" or "low-level swine."

TV station 6ABC reported in April that four students were suspended amid hazing allegations. One suspended player reportedly admitted in a letter: "Our team had a welcome freshman week, there is no denying that."

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Philadelphia, seeks undisclosed damages. St. Joe's suspended the team earlier this month.

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Raindrops keep falling on my head

This man knew how to stay dry during the on-and-off drizzle that fell all day Thursday. Forecasters say it will be cloudy and 75 Friday with no rain, sunny and 69 on Saturday, and will stay cloudy but get warmer, about 78 Sunday and 85 on Memorial Day. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER

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I took a DNA test to learn how to eat and exercise

Health. DNAFit offers highly personalized health advice.

The DNA swab is quick and easy. / FILE PHOTO

I was always the second-to-last kid picked in gym class.

I blamed it on my parents; my mom told me she was also infamous for her lack of athletic talent.

Finally, I had the chance to settle once and for all whether my genes were to blame when I got an email from DNAFit: "We understand that identifying and maintaining a fitness or weight-loss regime can be a frustrating and confusing experience. This is where understanding our DNA can help. … DNAFit's non-invasive saliva test allows the optimal diet and exercise program to be developed, personal to you and your genetics, to maximize results."

I swabbed my cheek and sent it in for analysis, taking all of two minutes.

A few weeks later, my results were back, and it was time for me to chat with Craig Pickering, an Olympic sprinter and sports scientist.

Pickering explained to me how the company comes up with its fitness and diet recommendations. "All of the genes have at least three peer-review studies behind them — some have 200, but they all have at least three," he said. "We are certain the genes have the effect we say they have."

The way the DNAFit diet and fitness reports work is that each section examines a trait, such as sensitivity toward carbohydrates or pace of post-exercise recovery, and lists the genes responsible.

I learned that my body was better suited for power exercises than endurance exercises; DNAFit advised that, given my genetic profile, my workouts should be split into 58 percent power (sprinting, high-intensity workouts) and 42 percent endurance (long-distance running) training.

The test also showed that I had a "very high" VO2 max score, which measures how effectively a person's body uses oxygen during exercise.

"It means it would potentially take you less training to get fit than it takes me," said Pickering, to my surprise.

My report also said that I recover very quickly between workouts.

"So I don't really have an excuse? I'm very unfit," I said.

"No, you don't have an excuse," he responded.

Pickering and I moved on to diet and, much to my delight, I learned that I had a very low risk for developing weight issues from fats and oils.

"You can probably put butter on everything," said Pickering.

I asked him if I could eat one slab of bacon every day. "Two," he responded.

I discovered that I had a below-average risk of developing weight problems from carbohydrates as well. This report was starting to become one big ego stroke.

Only when Pickering and I went over my elevated risk of developing health problems from the carcinogens in grilled or smoked meats did I feel a bit devastated.

"But I thought I could eat two slices of bacon every day," I said weakly.

"Maybe four times a week instead," he advised, helpfully.

I also learned that I can drink more coffee in addition to eating more fats and carbs.

I've been eating more bacon since my chat. Post-DNAFit life is pretty good.

I haven't started on power workouts yet. Even though it seems like a shame to waste my better-than-Olympic genes, Pickering did say I didn't have to exercise as much as other people to gain the same muscle — I have plenty of time.

Craig Pickering / GETTY IMAGES

Olympic sprinters

99%

Pickering pointed out that I possessed the CC alleles for the ACTN3 gene, which means I'm better able to produce Type II muscle fiber — also known as "fast-twitch" muscle fiber. Pickering said 99 percent of Olympic sprinters have at least one C allele.

Quoted

"Your genes are theoretically better than mine, and I'm an Olympic runner." Pickering

ANDREA PARK
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Oil spill. Cleanup of oil-fouled California beach continues

An oil-covered lobster lies dead on the beach after an oil spill near Refugio State Beach north of Goleta, California. / GETTY IMAGES

Crews clean oil from the beach at Refugio State Beach north of Goleta, California. / GETTY IMAGES

Cleanup teams continue to remove patches of crude petroleum that stained a California beach and fouled offshore waters from a pipeline rupture that may rank as the biggest oil spill to hit the Santa Barbara coastline in more than four decades.

As many as 2,500 barrels (105,000 gallons) of crude oil, according to the latest estimates, gushed onto Refugio State Beach and into the Pacific west of Santa Barbara when an underground pipeline running parallel to a coastal highway there inexplicably burst on Tuesday morning.

Plains All American Pipeline, which owns and operates the 24-inch line, said it shut off the flow about 30 minutes after control-room operators detected pressure irregularities.

By then, however, a torrent of oil had streamed down a canyon, under a culvert and onto the once-pristine beach, blackening a 4-mile stretch of sand and rocks and leaving two oil slicks in the water spanning more than 9 miles in length.

Cleanup

9

Nine cleanup vessels plied the ocean, corralling the slick with booms and skimming oil from the surface.

The company estimated that up to a fifth of the spill had reached the ocean.

Environmental activists and local officials said it was believed to be the largest oil spill in 46 years along the ecologically sensitive but energy-rich Santa Barbara shoreline, about 125 miles northwest of Los Angeles.

If the pipeline company's "worst-case" estimate of its oil release holds up, it would mark the biggest in the region since a 1969 offshore oil well blowout that dumped 80,000 to 100,000 barrels of crude petroleum into the Santa Barbara Channel and stands as the largest spill ever in California waters.

Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency for Santa Barbara County to hasten the availability of any resources needed.

REUTERS

Freddie Gray death

Grand jury indicts Baltimore police officers

A grand jury has brought charges against six Baltimore police officers in the death of Freddie Gray from injuries suffered while in police custody, Baltimore City State Attorney Marilyn Mosby told a news conference on Thursday.

Gray's death on April 19 set off weeks of largely peaceful protests in Baltimore punctuated by a day of rioting and arson after his funeral on April 27, when rioters threw rocks at police and set buildings and cars on fire.

The grand jury's findings, including one count of second-degree depraved heart murder against officer Caesar Goodson Jr., were largely in line with the charges that Mosby announced early this month. The officers will be arraigned on July 2.

"These past two weeks, my team has been presenting evidence to a grand jury that just today returned indictments against all six officers," Mosby told reporters. She took no questions.

The death of Gray, 25, followed a string of police-involved deaths of unarmed black men which provoked waves of protests across the United States.

The grand jury also charged Goodson, police officers William Porter, Edward Nero and Garret Miller, Lieutenant Brian Rice and Sergeant Alicia White with reckless endangerment.

REUTERS

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Five things you need to know

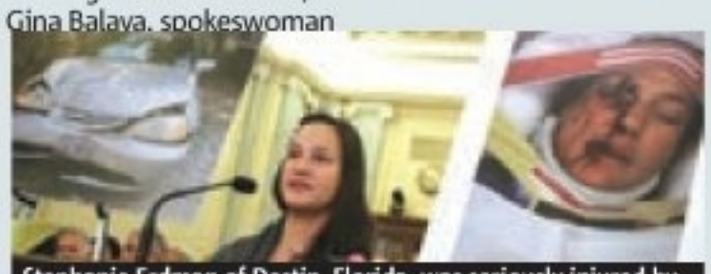
1 Detroit prosecutors join criminal probe of Takata over airbags

Prosecutors in Detroit have joined the U.S. federal probe into Takata Corp.'s defective airbag inflators that are linked to at least six deaths globally.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan and the U.S. Department of Justice's criminal division, including the fraud section in Washington, "are jointly handling the criminal investigation into Takata," Gina Balaya, spokeswoman for the Detroit office, said on Thursday.

"We have been cooperating fully and are engaged in a regular dialog with the Department of Justice, and we will continue to do so," a Takata spokesman said.

Takata's airbag inflators have been found to explode with too much force, spraying metal fragments inside cars and forcing automakers to recall more than 53 million vehicles worldwide since 2008. All of the deaths linked to the faulty part occurred in cars made by the supplier's top customer, Honda Motor Co. REUTERS



Stephanie Erdman of Destin, Florida, was seriously injured by an airbag explosion in her Honda Civic. / GETTY IMAGES

2 Illinois lawmakers pass bill for marijuana

The Illinois Senate passed a bill decriminalizing possession of small amounts of marijuana, sending it to the governor for signature.

The bill, which passed with a 37-19 vote, makes possession of up to 15 grams of marijuana a civil law violation punishable by a $125 fine. Individuals will not face jail time.

The measure was approved by the Illinois House of Representatives in April. A spokeswoman for Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican, did not say whether he would sign it. REUTERS

3 Russia warns Google, Twitter and Facebook on violations

Russia's media watchdog has written to Google, Twitter and Facebook, warning them against violating Russian Internet laws, and a spokesman said they risk being blocked if they do not comply with the rules.

Roskomnadzor said it had sent letters this week to the three U.S.-based Internet firms asking them to comply with Internet laws which critics of President Vladimir Putin have decried as censorship.

"In our letters we regularly remind [companies] of the consequences of violating the legislation," said Roskomnadzor spokesman Vadim Ampelonsky. REUTERS

4 Boy Scouts president says ban on gay leaders cannot stay

Boy Scouts of America President Robert Gates said the group's ban on adult gay leaders cannot be sustained, a move that could open the door to ending the policy that has caused rifts in the organization.

Gates said at a national meeting of the group that he does not plan to revoke the charter of Boy Scout councils that allow gay leaders, according to a text of the speech.

"We must deal with the world as it is, not as we might wish it to be. The status quo in our movement's membership standards cannot be sustained," said Gates. REUTERS

5 Woman kept in box found murdered

A Missouri woman who escaped captivity from a wooden box three weeks ago was found dead in a home on Thursday, along with her son, and police are searching for the man suspected both of locking her up and of murdering her.

Officers found Sandra Kay Sutton, 46, and son Zachary Wade Sutton, 17, shot dead in a house in Clinton, Missouri, according to a news release from the Clinton Police.

On April 30, Sutton told police that her former boyfriend, identified as James B. Horn Jr., 47, had routinely locked her in a box in their home in Sedalia, Missouri, over a four-month period. REUTERS

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Clooney monitors the world's decline in "Tomorrowland."
WALT DISNEY PICTURES

THE FUN STARTS HERE

wknd

George Clooney, eternal optimist

The "Tomorrowland" star plays bitter and grumpy in the new sci-fi film, but inside he's nothing but hopeful.

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George Clooney may be one of the few bona fide movie stars we have left, but he still thinks he's a bit out of place in the summer blockbuster arena. "Putting me in a summer movie is a very bold thought," he says with his trademark smirk. "First and foremost, I think it's a really bold thing for Disney to be willing to do a film that isn't a sequel and isn't a comic book and truly invest in a summer film of this sort of ilk."

What sort of ilk, exactly? "Tomorrowland," directed by Brad Bird and written by Bird and "Lost" creator Damon Lindelof, features Clooney as "a former genius, boy genius, who's gotten bitter in his old age" — as Clooney himself describes it — who teams up with a precocious teen (Britt Robertson) to get back to the secret world of Tomorrowland, an alternate realm the smartest minds disappeared to back in the 1960s to build a better future.

"Just so we're clear, when Damon and Brad showed up at my house, they said, 'We've got a part we've written for you,'" Clooney remembers. "And then I opened up the description of the character — 'a 55-year-old has-been.' I'm kind of going, 'Wait, hey, hey, hey, hang on a minute. Which part am I reading for?'"

Luckily, 54-year-old Clooney got over any lingering sense of vanity. "I just loved the idea," he says. "We live in a world right now where you turn on your television, and it's rough out there, and it can really wear on you after a period of time. We see generations now feeling as if it's sort of hopeless in a way. What I love about [the film] is it speaks to the idea that your future is not preordained, and that if you're involved, a single voice can make a difference — and I believe in that."

That 1960s optimism is something Clooney would like to see more of here in the 21st century. "I grew up during the Cold War period, and I always found that although we always thought that the world would end in a nuclear holocaust at some point, everybody was pretty hopeful," he says. "There was an awful lot of things going on that you felt you could change. I grew up in an era where the voice really did feel as if it mattered." It's what struck him about "Tomorrowland."

"It reminds you that young people don't start out their lives cynical or angry or bigoted. You have to be taught all of those things," explains the star. "I watch the world now and think, 'Well, I see really good signs from young people, and I feel as if the world will get better.' I've always been an optimist. I've been a realist, but I've been an optimist about it."

"What I love about it is it speaks to the idea that your future is not preordained, and that if you're involved, a single voice can make a difference — and I believe in that."

Here's looking at you, George.
GETTY IMAGES

RAPE ON 'GAME OF THRONES' AND ELSEWHERE

Sophie Turner's Sansa was once again the target of abuse on the most recent episode of "Game of Thrones." / HBO

We're once again talking about rape on "Game of Thrones." I know this is going to upset people on both sides, but I'm writing this column because it's important to talk about the issue.

Rape figures into a lot of storylines. Unfortunately, it's a reality in this world, and that doesn't look like it's going to change. Personally, I hate seeing it more than I can say. I don't think it's entertaining. I think it's a lazy way to advance plot. I think it's overused, often for shock value instead of as a way to advance a character's storyline.

It also makes sense in some stories. In this week's episode, it was hardly unexpected. Ramsay is a cruel and terrible person. My issue with the scene is that they decided to continue the "torture porn" of Sansa's story. Sansa took some small measure of control at the end of Season 4. Now, she's back with a madman after yet another forced marriage. This after her father was beheaded in front of her, she was abused by a mad king, forced to marry Tyrion, manipulated by Lord Baelish and suffered an attempted gang rape in an alley. Enough.

The rape made sense in terms of where the plot was going, but the issue is with how they're choosing to tell her story. Part of the issue is the way the show has handled rape in the past. For instance, in the book, Daenerys' wedding night was not rape. Still a forced marriage, but the show made it worse than it was, clearly for shock value. It was a stupid change, especially in light of the fact that she then falls in love with her rapist. Then there was the Cersei/Jaime scene that was a rape on the show and not in the book. The issue is with choices the "Game of Thrones" writers are making rather than a terrible thing that is, sadly, the logical next step in the story they chose to tell.

Look, the discussion is important. So, my two cents? You followed the story path in the most logical way. Maybe, "Game of Thrones" showrunners, we need to question why you decided to write this story in the first place.

Geek Girl in Hollywood

JENNA BUSCH

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Where are all the original movies?

Hollywood has become one giant nostalgic infinity loop of brands. Let's hope for some new ideas.

Remember this image from 1982's "Poltergeist"? It's been revived for the inevitable remake. / 20TH CENTURY FOX, MGM

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This weekend sees the release of "Poltergeist" — no, not the 1982 horror original, but rather a souped-up remake. Last weekend an even older franchise, "Mad Max," finally got its fourquel. In three weeks we'll have "Jurassic World" and two weeks after that "Terminator: Genisys" — both part of franchises launched between 20 and 30 years ago. Later this season comes "Vacation," which revives the National Lampoon series begun in 1983, and by year's end we get the first in a new rash of "Star Wars" movies, which will presumably spin off and procreate even after humankind itself has perished.

There are a couple of original movies coming out, but this is for the most part all we get: An endless stream of the same-old-same-old — an infinity loop where all is familiar, all is a brand, reaching back into the 1980s and beyond. Even if you've never seen the original "Poltergeist" (or its two decreasingly useful sequels) ,you've heard the name, and if you have seen the original then you're likely steeped in nostalgia for a film that scared you 33 years ago.

This is, of course, what we want, but what we want is complicated. We don't just want the fa-

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The next "Star Wars" film gets a new (but old) look. / LUCASFILM

miliar; we now want the sprawling, if not endless. As we're tirelessly reminded, we currently live in a new Golden Age of television, where people don't just binge-watch several episodes in one fell swoop but stew in these worlds, emerging from watching only to talk about it on social media and sometimes IRL.

This inevitably has bled into the movies, where studios finally have an excuse to create elaborate intertwined worlds, and make billions doing it. Every film is connected in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and soon the same will go for DC — each label spinning off their own "Breaking Bad"-sized stories that go on forever, with no end in sight.

It can be reactionary to criticize audiences for only wanting the familiar. But it's still a problem. The abundance of regurgitated product — not just remakes but movies about comics that have been around since, in Superman's case, 1938 — taps into the old concept of the infantalization of culture. Two generations have grown up in a world with "Star Wars," and even grown, professional adults can be reduced to kid-like wonder when a new trailer for its next episode, "The Force Awakens," crashes the Internet.

This may sound bleak but it doesn't have to be. "Star Wars" has new blood in it, including directors J.J. Abrams and Rian Johnson, who seem to be taking an aging franchise in similar but different directions. "Similar but different," though, may be as close as the future will get to an original idea. It would be nice if, just to mix it up, Hollywood spent more time dreaming up something fresh. After all, original films would one day make for great films to remake, reboot and revive.

Sorry, nerds

Even Simon Pegg — a nerd who's made a pretty penny on making nerdism mainstream — recently told Radio Times that he worries about nerd culture. "Now we're all consuming childish things," he said. "Films used to be about challenging, emotional journeys or moral questions that might make you walk away and re-evaluate how you felt about ... whatever. Now we're really not thinking about anything, other than the fact that the Hulk just had a fight with a robot."

This isn't entirely true. At its best, nerd culture writing connects these seemingly frivolous products to challenging, moral questions. But serious fare used to have more seats at the table. The stirring courtroom dramas of yesterday are the VOD miscellany of today, barely seeing movie theaters, if at all. Real drama is on TV; movies are just a big green guy, created decades before you were born, smashing things.

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Gaspard Ulliel's Yves Saint Laurent strikes a pose with Lea Seydoux and Aymeline Valade. SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

'Saint Laurent'

Director: Bruno Bonello
Stars: Gaspard Ulliel, Louis Garrel
Rating: R

There's already been a Wikipedia movie about Yves Saint Laurent: last year's "Yves Saint Laurent." Now there's "Saint Laurent," and we hope this doesn't get confusing, because "Saint Laurent" is the crazy, bold one. An old-school epic of excess, it soaks up the fashion god's 1967-1976 period, namely when YSL (a smirking Gaspard Ulliel) was at the bottom of a drug and drink hole, emerging periodically to create the best, most iconoclastic work of his life. It doesn't shy away from the decadence or treat it as purgatory; it luxuriates in long club scenes and, eventually, set pieces of pure debauchery. It gets that self-destruction, to the true self-destroyer, can be fun because, comparatively, sobriety sounds so boring.

That makes "Saint Laurent" seem more focused than it is. Shambling happily over two and a half hours, it mostly proceeds through a linear narrative, but the scenes often feel chosen at random. The token lovers' tiff gets 20 seconds of screen time while a business meeting that doesn't even feature YSL gets five hilariously repetitive minutes. Though it tries to hide its biopic roots — it's best to visit Saint Laurent's Wiki page prior, lest you be lost — it still follows a fall-and-rise trajectory, though at least it builds to a climax of transcendent sensory overload. It's a movie to get lost in, where the pleasures are about getting caught up in the moment. And unlike the other Saint Laurent film, this is one you can't watch with grandma. MP

'Tomorrowland' is one eccentric Disney movie

There's not a ton of time spent in "Tomorrowland"'s alternate universe techie metropolis, but when it's there, it's a lot of star Britt Robertson staring at stuff. DISNEY

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George Clooney and Britt Robertson play tech wizards out to save Tomorrowland, an alternate universe realm that faintly resembles the retro-futurist Disneyland theme park area, from an evil despot (Hugh Laurie). And all this somehow has to do with global warming.

The lowdown: "Tomorrowland" is not just another Disney theme park movie. It's been completely co-opted by its eccentric filmmaker, animator-turned-live-action director Brad Bird, who can do what he wants after "The Incredibles," "Ratatouille" and the last "Mission: Impossible." And so he has: Thinking way outside the box, he's taken a sorry assignment — make a blockbuster not about a Disneyland ride but a Disneyland area — and turned it into an oftentimes delightfully strange, only sometimes creepily Ayn Randian ode to genius unfettered by pesky second-guessers and evil bureaucrats.

It's more than that: It's an environmentalist screed, complete with a big speech that's not subtle even for a blob of liberal-minded entertainment. But "Tomorrowland" is entertaining entertainment, even when its many parts aren't quite fitting together. At its best, it gets caught up in the moment and inside its set pieces and its sometimes snaky, convoluted plot structure. It mostly charms its way out of its problems and even goes relatively light on Bird's Objectivist leanings, which he likes to embed in movies as couldn't-resist subtext. Tomorrowland itself is described as though it were the John Galt compound from "Atlas Shrugged": a place where the brilliant can thrive, "free of politics, bureaucracy, greed." It turns out to be more complicated than that, but even if it wasn't, Bird still has a knack for turning his questionable ideas into beautifully made and deeply involving romps that nearly fool you into buying its crackpot philosophy.

'Tomorrowland'

Director: Brad Bird
Stars: George Clooney, Britt Robertson
Rating: PG

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Pinaki Sengupta stars in "Aparajito," the second in the Apu Trilogy. JANUS FILMS

Binge-watch one of the great film series

MATT PRIGGE
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The Apu Trilogy

Director: Satyajit Ray
Stars: Soumitra Chatterjee, Karuna Banerjee
Rating: NR

●●●●●

Long before "Boyhood" and even predating Francois Truffaut's decades-spanning Antoine Doinel films, there was Satyajit Ray's three "Apu" movies. Granted, the actors changed, but the effect of watching them is no less mind-blowing. In 1955's "Pather Panchali" (a movie Truffaut, usually a man of fine taste, vocally berated), Ray depicted the boyhood of a Bengali kid from the country. By the next year's "Aparajito," Apu and family had relocated to the mean city. Finally, in 1959's "Apur Sansar," sometimes known as "The World of Apu," he's a young man (played by longtime Ray star Soumitra Chatterjee) whose sunny resilience comes face-to-face with the grind of repeated tragedy.

All three films — which will play throughout the next week at the Ritz at the Bourse — are remarkably different in terms of plot and focus. Yet all exude the same sense of calm. Ray, no slouch as a musician himself, hired Ravi Shankar to compose the scores, and each film is always up for a rapturous raga montage that milks casual poetry out of the beauties of city and rural life. They're as much about drama as music, with hairpin plot turns punctuating long montages tailor-made for trance-outs.

The "Apu" films were among America's first glimpses of Indian cinema, though they were exceptions to the rule — modest slices of life in a country that was, even then, more in thrall to Bollywood-style excess than understatement. Instead, they share more DNA with independent cinema. And thanks to new, loving restorations, these gorgeous films are somehow even easier on the eyes.

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Timely drone drama 'Good Kill' is just OK

MATT PRIGGE
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Ethan Hawke plays Maj. Thomas Egan, who spends his days bombing suspected terrorists. Thing is, he does it from a Las Vegas base via a drone program, after which he drives home to his family. This soon starts taking a toll.

The lowdown: Screenwriter and director Andrew Niccol is like the student who does just a hair more than is required. He's tackled reality TV and voyeurism ("The Truman Show"), genetics ("Gattaca"), the digital age ("S1m0ne") and war profiteering ("Lord of War"). "Good Kill" is a smart take that, sure enough, offers just slightly more than you would have imagined and goes exactly where you think it will go.

Ethan Hawke drones alone in "Good Kill." / IFC FILMS

At its best, "Good Kill" turns its pervasive flatness into a pro, conveying the sleepy, zombified purgatory in which Egan is stuck. Hawke can be a lively, personable actor, but he's just as adept at shutting himself completely down, keeping all of his emotions in, as though his body were a fleshy diving bell. Scenes inside the control room look like a "Star Trek" episode crossed with a dim arcade; when it goes outside into the Nevada desert, it looks just like the compounds they're targeting overseas. What's to keep their enemies from taking them out with the same technology?

"Good Kill" won't let you miss how subtly clever it is, but it needs at least one more element, or it needs to take one less predictable direction. It's self-satisfied to the point of being underwhelming. Only Bruce Greenwood, as their grouchy reigning colonel, punctures the mood, not only injecting life but an air of unpredictability in a film that from its first frame is a foregone conclusion.

'Good Kill'

Director: Andrew Niccol
Stars: Ethan Hawke, Zoe Kravitz
Rating: R
• • • • •

'Slow West'

• • • • •

"Slow West" isn't your usual anti-Western. For one thing, it's roughly half a regular Western. Kodi Smit-McPhee plays Jay, a 16-year-old Scotsman who's come to the great Old West to find his beloved. Luckily, he's picked up by Silas (Michael Fassbender), a cigarillo-chomping Man with a Name, and they must face off against, among others, a fur coat-rocking baddie (Ben Mendelsohn).

Silas seems to have walked straight out of the Western genre itself, and it's the back-and-forth between myth and something weirder that gives "Slow West" its tension and unique voice. Its pitilessness is tempered by a goofy streak, which makes room for absurdist diversions and sight gags. And it has a climax that works as both a deconstruction and a primo example of a classic shoot-'em-up set piece. Director John Maclean (formerly of The Beta Band) wants you to be conscious of genre tropes and bite your nails at the same time. You can watch it with your art-snob pals and with your Clint Eastwood movie-raised dad. MP

Kodi Smit-McPhee and Michael Fassbender head across the prairie in "Slow West." A24

Spend a night with the living dead

Like zombies, drive-ins are coming back to life.

SHAUN BRADY
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

Have a retro experience at the Mahoning, which has been screening films since 1948. PROVIDED

Over the last few years, Awesome Fest has provided a retro movie experience for Philly film buffs, showing pop culture classics and even setting up a makeshift drive-in theater in Eakins Oval. With the series' founders too busy suing one another to program a season this year, local audiences may have to venture a bit further afield to get their cult film fix. The Mahoning Drive-In Theater, 90 minutes from the city in Lehighton, Pa., is not only providing a day-trip alternative but one-ups Awesome Fest by screening exclusively 35mm prints on one of the largest screens in the country.

This weekend provides the perfect reason to make the trek, as the Mahoning has partnered with Philly horror-film presenters Exhumed Films for "Zombiefest!," three nights of living dead triple-features. The festival will feature genre-shaping films from the '70s and '80s, including classics by pioneers George A. Romero and Lucio Fulci and the Romero/Dario Argento collaboration "Two Evil Eyes," adapting Edgar Allan Poe stories, among others.

PROVIDED

"Zombiefest!" helps usher in a new direction for the Mahoning, which has remained in business since its initial opening in 1948 but fell on the same hard times faced by most drive-in theaters. The theater was recently taken over by projectionist Jeff Mattox, along with new managers Virgil Cardamone and Matthew McClanahan, Temple film school grads determined to preserve a special kind of cinematic experience.

"I come from a tangible film background," says Cardamone. "Digital theaters are showing glorified DVDs, and if you came up in a certain era, the mind and the heart are trained to feel 35mm in a different way.

"It's nice to be one of the standard-bearers for keeping that medium alive. What makes this theater awesome is that it's a pure retro experience."

In past weekends, the Mahoning has screened double-features of "The Wizard of Oz" and "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory"; prison films "The Shawshank Redemption" and "Cool Hand Luke"; and, to counter the fact that nearly every one of their competitors was showing "Avengers: Age of Ultron," a superhero throwback double-feature with the classic "Superman" starring Christopher Reeve and Michael Keaton's first turn as "Batman."

Up next

The weekend following "Zombiefest!" will be highlighted by the drive-in's official ribbon-cutting, and programming will continue with retro double-features every weekend afterwards, including movies coinciding with Lehighton's car show and motorcycle rally later in the summer.

Cardamone also hopes to build a stage and host live music performances at the theater. "This whole project," he says, "is a means to try to save the drive-in and push it into a stratosphere that it's never seen before."

Real-world love advice

CHARLES J. ORLANDO

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CHARLES J. ORLANDO IS A RELATIONSHIP EXPERT AND AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING BOOK SERIES "THE PROBLEM WITH WOMEN ... IS MEN." VISIT METRO.US/CHARLES-J-ORLANDO FOR MORE COLUMNS.

HOW DO I GO FROM BOOTY CALL TO GIRLFRIEND?

Dear Charles:
I've gone out a few times with a new guy. Every date has been amazing. Too amazing, actually, because I ended up at his place at the end of the second date. (The sex was mind-blowing, by the way). We've been dating for the last couple of months, but at the end of every date he wants to go back to his place. It's become very routine: I talk and text with him all week, then Thursday afternoon he asks what I'm doing Friday night. He picks me up, we have a great time and then — you know.

I sent him a text last Sunday (the morning after) because I'm getting confused. He finally answered me the next Friday morning with an excuse of "Sorry, I've been busy," and a promise that we would talk that night. Same date. No discussion. Great sex. No clarity from him.

Is he just texting you for sex? ISTOCK

What's the deal? Am I just being used (because I feel like I am)?
—A

Hi, A:
The fact that he didn't address your feelings is an obvious red flag. From his behavior, he seems to be using his charm to make you feel the right way to lower your guard and raise your skirt. From there, he just needs to play things cool and keep you guessing, wondering and chasing him, until the next Thursday night, so he can set up another date.

Here's the harsh truth: If you have been dating a guy for a few weeks and all he has are Friday nights available, there is a very good chance that he's full of s— and is playing you. Two months is enough time to establish what's what for a relationship in its early stages. You don't need to know if you are getting married (obviously), but to know if he wants to spend some time with you should be a no-brainer. He should want that, too.

My gut: He's texting 24 hours in advance for a regular Friday night booty call. Can that change? Perhaps, but only if he really wants to invest — only if he's truly interested in you.

My advice: Put your needs out clearly. Then, back off and let him do his half of the work. If he is really into you, he will put in real effort beyond a text message looking for sex. If not, he'll stop contact — which will save your head the stress of wondering and your heart the pain of being used. However, I would bet that if the sex is really good, he will play the role of "good guy" for a while, until you let your guard down again, and then return to the "I'm busy" routine. You would have to hold the line of "I will not settle for second best" and create a scenario where he needs to value you and invest. If he refuses, it's time to move on.

For exclusive commentary, visit **Metro.us/blogs**

Letters to the editor

Memorial Day

Memorial Day is fast approaching, and I hope the many will not forget the importance of this day. Memorial Day is not just another day off to shop for sales or do backyard barbecuing. In my opinion, Memorial Day is a time to remember all those who gave their lives to protect the freedoms we enjoy.

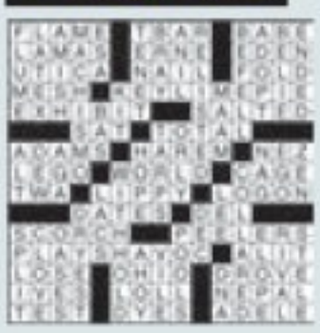
This Memorial Day, I find myself thinking what it means to be an American. The answer is crystal clear, and that is the pride to live in a country that allows us the personal freedom to speak our minds. These freedoms come with great personal sacrifice for those who leave family, friends and jobs to serve the greater good. I myself have served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam era. Although I never did see combat, I had friends who did and died serving our country. So please, this Memorial Day please honor those who gave their lives for those things we hold most dear. You can do this by attending parades and ceremonies in your local communities and saluting those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Let us also not forget those who serve on the home front like police, firefighters and the EMS. You can also call a veteran you know and thank them for serving and keeping us free from tyranny.

FREDERICK R. BEDELL JR.

letters@metro.us

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact info.

Thursday's answer



STARTING WITH A WHIMPER

Opinion

TOM FOREMAN

CNN CORRESPONDENT AND AUTHOR OF THE UPCOMING BOOK "MY YEAR OF RUNNING DANGEROUSLY: A DAD, A DAUGHTER, AND A RIDICULOUS PLAN."

Heaven help us, here they come. Dashing through the fields of Iowa and babbling by the brooks of New Hampshire, leaning on tractor fenders and cradling coffee cups, nodding in heartfelt agreement with "whatever-the-hell whoever-the-hell" says as long as that "who" is a bona fide voter.

Yes, I've denied it as long as I can, but now I must accept the painful, awful, terrifying truth: The 2016 presidential race is underway, and the "contenders" are upon us. I know you're disappointed too, and the fact that their numbers are growing doesn't help.

I suppose the problem is that I always, foolishly expect something different. They come out of the gate with big proclamations about "bold ideas" and "plans for action," and I can't help but believe that this time, maybe someone will actually shoot straight with us. Then they drop into "puppy guarding." If you've never heard the term, think back to when you were a child playing hide-and-seek. Remember the kid who would never try to find anyone, but would just hang around the base? That's puppy guarding — taking no risk, protecting your position at all costs and not really playing.

This has become the chief strategy for serious candidates in both parties. Admit nothing. Say nothing. Make no solid statements about the policies you'll support or the programs you'll launch. It's weird. I mean, if you actually think you'd make a good president, wouldn't you want people to know your ideas, your values and your beliefs? You'll have better luck finding a vegan at a steak fry.

The only candidates who break that mold usually start off with little hope of winning, like Senator Bernie Sanders. Give him credit for saying this week he wants college to be free. That's a real idea, and he's brave enough to let you decide if you like it. But the rest of the crew working the cornfields? Brace yourself for months of them saying, "Trust me, trust me, trust me," while making it clear they don't trust you at all.

CNN=POLITICS

Sudoku: Easy and hard

		6			8			1
			6	3			9	
		7			5		2	
		1	8	6			5	
		9	2		3	7		
	6			9	7	8		
	9		3			2		
	8			2	6			
3			7			4		

		5		7	3			8
				2			6	9
2	8					7		
	1		5		9			
4			2		8			3
			7		4		2	
		3					8	5
9	2			5				
5			3	8		1		

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Horoscope

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20
Change is in the air. You have critical choices ahead of you, so don't rush to make a move until you have your plans in place. Look for a position that suits you.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22
Choose your words carefully. Your emotions will surface, and a hasty retort issued in anger will lead to a rift between you and a friend or relative.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22
Delegate jobs in order to avoid being burdened with too many responsibilities. Offer guidance and step aside. Trying to oversee everything will result in a lack of recreation time.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22
This is a perfect day for love. Your instincts are right on the money, and your appeal has never been stronger. Your admirers will be ready to help you achieve your goals.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22
Revealing too much will backfire on you. Diplomacy is key. Keep your secrets private, no matter who is asking.

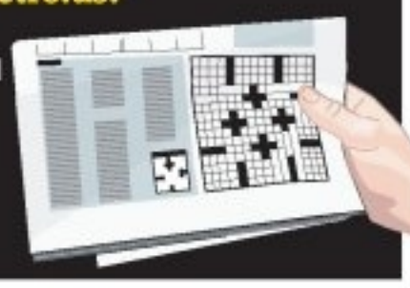
♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Spending quality time with loved ones will strengthen your bonds with them. Your creativity and magnetism will impress your allies and stymie any competition you encounter along the way.

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Get involved. No one will listen to an armchair quarterback. Once you engage yourself, you will have the insight necessary to make changes.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20
Even though things are running smoothly, everyone has ups and downs. If you are feeling anxious, take time to remember all of the good things in your life.

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18
You probably have too many irons in the fire. Edit your options and focus on those that will bring you the most satisfaction. Running around without a plan will get you nowhere.

Visit us online at **Metro.us.**
Use your smartphone to find today's crossword answers! Download and open the Blippar app on your smartphone and hold the screen over the puzzle.



♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20
Romance is heating up. Shower someone special with personal attention. A dinner or trip will help keep you in harmony. If you are single, get out and look for love.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20
You are a kind and caring individual, so don't let a harmless remark cause you concern. Some people enjoy criticizing others. It gives them a feeling of superiority. Walk away.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21
Don't get drawn into a quarrel with someone who doesn't share your beliefs. It's doubtful that an argument will make a difference to either one of you in the end. **EUGENIA LAST**

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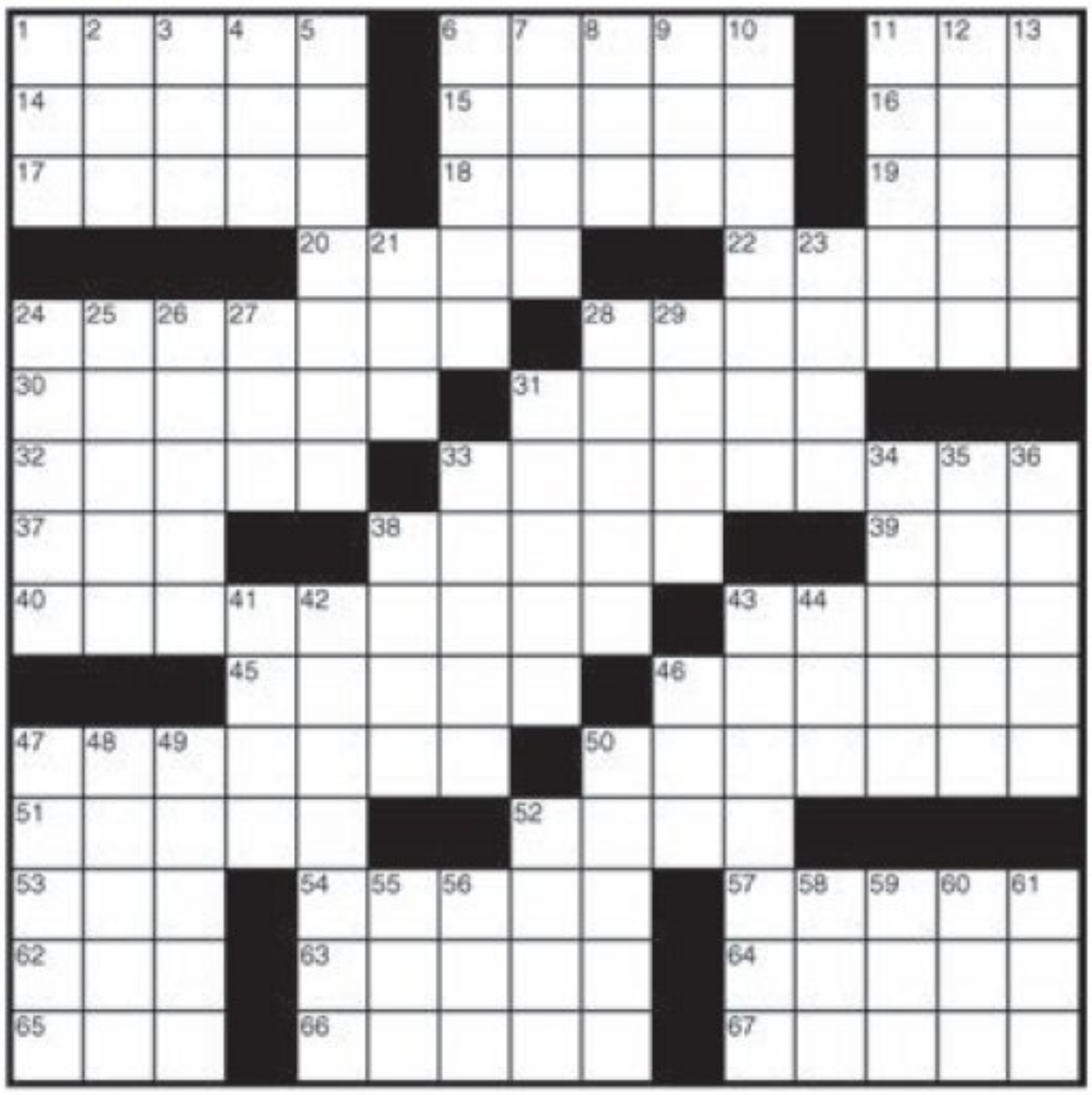

Across

1 Bullwinkle, e.g.
6 Lady's honorific
11 Take the title
14 Debate issue
15 Susan Lucci vamp
16 Garden tool
17 Indefinite time
18 Take a sip
19 Blow away
20 Crazed captain
22 Dieter's lunch
24 Floppy-eared dog
28 Pet shop cuties
30 Fictional Queen
31 Peter, in Panama
32 Surprise attacks
33 Huge
37 Versatile vehicle
38 Kid's dad
39 Fix a squeak
40 Big city in Mexico
43 Fiery dance
45 .Vine-covered
46 .More muddy
47 .Leopard cousins
50 Book store?
51 Forward-looking verb
52 -- -de-camp
53 Back muscle, for short
54 Mr. Lombardi
57 Slightly tinted
62 "Green" prefix
63 Southfork surname
64 Demean
65 L. -- Hubbard
66 Gift recipient
67 Chilly

Down

1 Alps, for short
2 Oola's guy
3 Unfold, in poetry
4 -- vous plait
5 Creamy pastries
6 Gold or silver
7 Tent dweller
8 Bad-mouth
9 Do something
10 Symphony VIP
11 Ambergris source
12 Hawkeye
13 Has to have
21 Attention getter
23 On the summit
24 Vaccine
25 Aristotle's teacher
26 UFO pilot
27 Composer -- Rorem
28 Pogo's creator
29 Lazily
31 Blanched
33 Cables
34 Ancient Greek colony
35 Timbuktu's river
36 Morning --
38 Plankton
41 Money drawer
42 Developed gradually
43 Lama, usually
44 Flight stat
46 Halfway
47 Famed Canadian doctor
48 -- Canyon (Pueblo cultural area)
49 Shirley of "Goldfinger"
50 Feudal vassal
52 Teen bane
55 -- Jima
56 Author Anais --
58 Teahouse attire
59 Forty winks
60 Mind reader's gift
61 Susan of "L.A. Law"

3

SPORTS

Herremans hurts

Offensive line

At the moment, you have to say they're worse. Todd Herremans was a mainstay on the Eagles line for a decade and signed with the Colts after being cut. The lack of any reinforcements along the offensive line is even more troubling than Herremans' departure. This has been an elite unit, but they aren't getting any younger.

Are the Eagles better or

NFL. The Eagles have made tons of headlines this spring, so is the team better than it was last year?

It's taken three years, but Chip Kelly has seized control of the Eagles front office.

And as such, he has had final say on every transaction, draft pick and signing the Birds have made during this crazy offseason.

With many fan favorites shipped out of town and many more new ones, how do the Eagles stack up in comparison to their 10-6 team from a year ago?

Metro breaks down each position to determine whether they've improved, gotten worse or stayed the same.

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Quarterbacks

In: *Sam Bradford (trade, Rams); Tim Tebow (free agent)*
Out: *Nick Foles (trade, Rams)*

SAM BRADFORD

It remains to be fully learned what the Eagles gave up in Nick Foles, and what they gained in Sam Bradford. Call it a wash at the moment, but given his $12 million higher salary and the second-round pick the Eagles gave up for him, Bradford will have to significantly outperform Foles for this deal to be a success.

Running backs

In: *DeMarco Murray (Cowboys free agent); Ryan Mathews (Chargers free agent)*
Out: *LeSean McCoy (trade, Bills); Chris Polk (free agent, signed with Texans)*

It was hard to imagine the Eagles could be better at running back in 2015 when they traded McCoy, the franchise's all-time leading rusher. But Murray is the reigning league leader in yards, and Mathews, despite missing 20 games over his first five seasons, has two 1,000-yard seasons to his name.

There are worries, nonetheless. Like most of the worries about the Eagles, they revolve around injury. Over the first three seasons of his career, Murray missed 11 games. Additionally, there is a serious track record in the NFL, when running backs carry the ball as often as Murray did last season (392 times, 80 more than second place, which is, coincidentally, McCoy) and it's not good.

But a conservative estimate still gives Murray a 1,500-yard season in 2015. If the Eagles can carefully manage Murray's workload, and he and Mathews can stay healthy, this group could be great.

THE EAGLES RUNNING GAME SHOULD STILL BE IN GOOD SHAPE IN 2015, LED BY RUSHING CHAMP MURRAY.

Wide receivers, tight ends

In: *Nelson Agholor (draft, USC); Miles Austin (Browns free agent)*
Out: *Jeremy Maclin (free agent, signed with Chiefs); James Casey (cut, signed by Broncos)*

This is the first position where the Eagles are unambiguously worse than they were last season. Nelson Agholor has been cast as a replacement for Maclin and may well be, one day. It's a bit much to expect from a rookie. Miles Austin could recapture his best form in Dallas and it still wouldn't replace the production and versatility the Eagles lost in Maclin. Losing pro bowlers in back-to-back years will have an impact.

Jordan Matthews, Agholor, Josh Huff and Zach Ertz will also need to take big steps forward.

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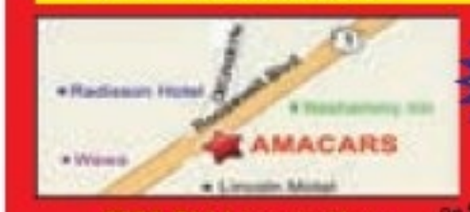

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worse after wild offseason?

Linebackers

In: *Kiko Alonso (trade, Bills); Brad Jones (Packers free agent); Jordan Hicks (draft, Tennessee)*
Out: *Trent Cole (cut, signed with Colts), Casey Matthews (cut, signed with Vikings)*

The rich get richer. Cole's loss will be felt, but the Eagles kept Brandon Graham around when many thought he would leave, and that should help alleviate the burden. If Marcus Smith can get on the field (and play well), that would go a long way toward offsetting Cole's loss as well.

Inside, adding Alonso and Hicks will create less pressure on DeMeco Ryans to return from injury, provided Alonso himself has recovered from the torn ACL he suffered in 2014.

If healthy, Alonso could be a tackling machine in the middle for the Eagles. / ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Cornerbacks

In: *Byron Maxwell (Seahawks free agent); Walter Thurmond (Giants free agent); Eric Rowe (draft, Utah); JaCorey Shepherd (draft, Kansas); Randall Evans (draft, Kansas State); E.J. Biggers (Redskins free agent)*
Out: *Cary Williams (cut, signed with Seahawks), Bradley Fletcher (cut, signed with Patriots)*

Hopefully, the area of greatest improvement will come here, in one of the areas of greatest need. Maxwell was the prize free agent at the position, but will have to get used to not seeing three pro bowlers surround him in the secondary.

Brandon Boykin took issue with Thurmond declaring himself the best slot corner in the league in 2014. Perhaps now they can settle that.

Byron Maxwell

Safeties

Out: *Nate Allen (cut, signed with Raiders)*

This is the reason cornerback was just one of the areas of greatest need. And unfortunately, the same reinforcements weren't brought in at safety. There wasn't great cause for concern over the departure of Nate Allen, until no player was brought in to replace him and the job was left for the players on the roster who couldn't beat Allen out last season.

Rowe has played corner and safety, and could also come into play here. It's hard to believe they'll end up any worse, but equally hard to say the Eagles are any better at safety.

Defensive line

In: *Brian Mihalik (draft, Boston College)*

There's not very much to report on this front. The defensive line is intact (thankfully as the Birds held on to Fletcher Cox) and young, and should continue to improve this season.

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Is the end finally in sight for Sixers' rebuild project?

NBA. The 76ers' boatload of draft picks is slowly transforming into a prospect-laden team with lots of potential.

Sam Hinkie says he expects the 76ers to be competitive as soon as they possibly can. / GETTY IMAGES

The dream scenario never materialized.

For playoff-starved Sixers fans, they must have watched the NBA Lottery Tuesday night with anticipation. In the end, they had to be a bit frustrated.

Instead of landing three first-round draft picks, including a potential No. 1 overall selection, the Sixers wound up with the No. 3 slot. That's it.

With a 15.6 percent chance of winning the No. 1 position, that distinction ended up with the Timberwolves. The Lakers were second, leaving the pick protected and not heading to the Sixers.

If Kentucky's Karl-Anthony Towns and Duke's Jahlil Okafor go No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, that leaves talent such as Ohio State's D'Angelo Russell, Emmanuel Mudiay — who played in China — Duke's Justise Winslow and Mario Hezonja (Croatia) as targets, among others.

The Heat's ping pong ball came in at No. 10, thus protecting that pick as well. The Sixers will look for the best possible player at No. 3, along with five second-round picks, when the NBA Draft takes place June 25 in Brooklyn. The Sixers possess picks No. 35, 37, 47, 58 and 60.

"I think [Tuesday] is a good outcome for us," Sixers President and GM Sam Hinkie told reporters. "I thought we would get the fourth pick. That was our single most likely outcome to get one pick. We had a 77 percent chance to come out of this with only one lottery pick. Maybe we have been spoiled the last few years having two [picks] per year. Maybe going forward we will have that again, but we thought we could come out with only one pick and we thought it would be four."

The Sixers held the No. 3 pick last year and selected Kansas' Joel Embiid. He sat out the entire 2014-15 season recovering from injuries to his back and leg.

If the NBA trade deadline was any indication, Hinkie will always be unpredictable. He dealt Michael Carter-Williams in a surprising last-minute move. Between now and the draft, the Sixers will do their due diligence. Anything can happen.

"It is an important time to gather information about these players because it is our last time," Hinkie said. "Many of these players will get drafted, and some of them will play really well, and we fast forward and they are free agents. We won't get a chance to have them in our gym to run and shoot and test and interview again. They will be on television 82 nights a year, but we won't get an up-close-and-personal feel like we can now. We try to take advantage of that."

The Sixers could have as many as four first-round picks in the 2016 draft. The losses are likely to pile up again this coming season even with an influx of talent. But the future is starting to look brighter.

ANDY JASNER
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Third twice in a row

The third pick in the draft isn't too shabby. Here are the last six players to go No. 3 in the NBA Draft:

- 2014: Joel Embiid, Kansas to 76ers
- 2013: Otto Porter, Georgetown to Wizards
- 2012: Bradley Beal, Florida to Wizards
- 2011: Enes Kanter, Kentucky to Jazz
- 2010: Derrick Favors, Georgia Tech to Nets
- 2009: James Harden, Arizona State to Thunder

Back east

Phillies return to East Coast with series at Nationals

Have the Phillies been overachievers during their recent streak of hot play?

With a batting average nearly .060 points higher than that of their first 36 games, the Phillies have had pop of late, averaging close to double-digit hits in their last nine games.

Their pitching has also been lights out. Before Thursday afternoon's series finale against the Rockies, Philly's rotation had a 1.39 ERA, the lowest of any team since May 13. It's no secret they've been beating up on the league's worst, taking two of four from the Pirates and sweeping the Diamondbacks before making hay in Colorado. Starting Friday (7 p.m. on CSN), they will play a pair of NL East contenders back-to-back on the road in the Nationals and then the Mets.

Sean O'Sullivan (1-2, 3.68 ERA) will oppose Max Scherzer (4-3, 1.75 ERA) in Friday's opener at Nationals Park.

The other two games in the series will feature headliners Cole Hamels and Stephen Strasburg Saturday night and Aaron Harang against Gio Gonzalez on getaway day Sunday. EVAN MACY

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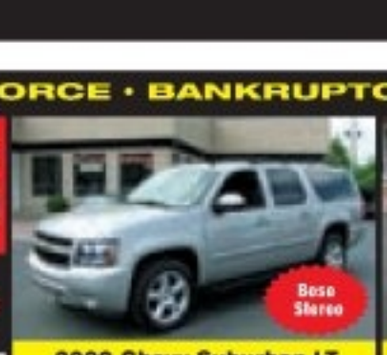
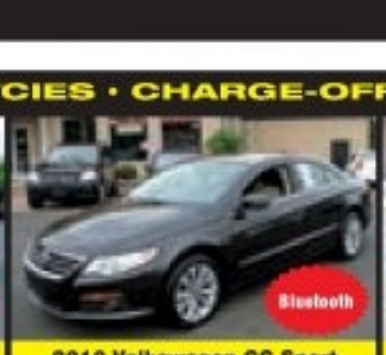
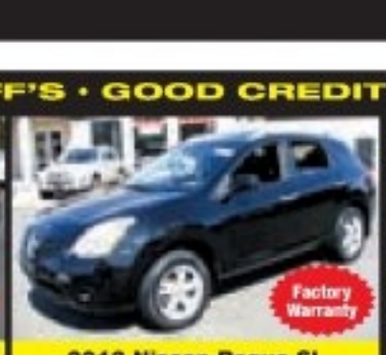


2013 Hyundai Veloster
$19,900



2011 Toyota Corolla S
$11,900



2007 Mercedes CLK 63 AMG
$24,900

2009 Chevy Suburban LT
$23,900

2010 Volkswagen CC Sport
$16,900

2012 Nissan Rogue SL
$22,900

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